

Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan: Winter 2009 Update



The August 2006 Big Creek Fire burns above Paradise Valley
(Courtesy of Renegade Outfitters, Bozeman, Montana)

Park County Fire Warden's Office
Park County, Montana
December, 2009

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Reviewed by:



Chairperson, Park County Commissioners



Park County Fire Warden



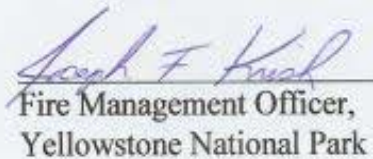
East Zone Fire Management Officer,
Gallatin National Forest



Director, Park County Planning
Department



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Introduction

History of the Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Spurred by the increasing impact of wildfires on human habitation in once-unpopulated areas and recommendations of the 2000 National Fire Plan, Title I of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) authorized and defined Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 3, 2003, this act emphasized the CWPP as a tool for local participation and planning with the following advantages:

- Establishment of a coordinated plan to meet the challenges of maintaining a safe and viable community based on a premise that "*....a collaborative relationship between Park County residents and all forms of government...fosters an effective, proactive program to reduce adverse impacts of wildfire in our communities.*" (*Park County 2006 CWPP*). Although non-binding, the CWPP sets forth possible goals and realistic strategies for increasing the effectiveness of cooperative efforts such as public education campaigns, hazardous fuels reduction programs, and firefighting capabilities.
- Determination of *local* definitions and boundary parameters for the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and construction of consensus-based assessments for determining fuels treatment priorities for community-identified 'at risk' values such as private and public improvements and infrastructure, economic engines, and recreational opportunities.
- Increased access to state, regional, and federal funding and technical assistance programs--with the recognition that resources are better utilized by communities with a demonstrated history of cooperative approaches to the challenges of wildfire hazard mitigation.

Prepared by Jen Wilke and Eric Morris of Elkhorn Fire Management and led by an volunteer eleven-member steering committee, the 2006 Park County CWPP was the culmination of an eleven-month effort to bring together concerned residents, business owners, emergency responders, private and public land managers, and other local stakeholders. Through public meetings, workshops, and community assessments, the original CWPP made the following accomplishments:

- Identification of values-at-risk due to a wildfire.
- Presentation of attainable solutions to mitigate risk through a range of efforts including prevention through education, preparedness and planning, suppression, fuels reduction, community assistance, restoration and rehabilitation, and effective cooperation between land management agencies.
- Formulation of a predetermined set of criteria to identify wildfire risk
- Prioritization of mitigation projects using assessment outcomes
- Identification of factors leading to wildfire-caused structure loss and offering strategies to reduce ignitability.

Purpose of the 2009 Update

As recent large events such as the 2006 Big Creek Fire attest, the wildfire risk in Park County has not abated, and the CWPP should continue to demonstrate relevance for increasing community resilience against similar impacts. This update contains a 'snapshot' of current efforts measured against the original goals and strategies produced by the 2006 CWPP, and is intended to identify specific successes as well as areas that need increased attention-- with the caveat that the CWPP is *not in itself a regulatory document*. Rather it is designed as a guideline to fortify wildfire risk mitigation efforts--flexible and modifiable as policy, public sentiment and the conditions of the human and natural landscape of Park County change. Regular and on-going participation by residents and other stakeholders is the key to this plan.

Recent Wildfire History

Although the 2008 and 2009 fire seasons were relatively quiet, the summers of 2006 and 2007 were among the busiest in recent memory.

The lightning-caused 2006 Big Creek fire eventually grew to 14,000 acres, destroying two homes and four outbuildings in rural sub-divisions above Emigrant, Montana.

In Sweetgrass County, the 208,000 acre Derby Fire during the same month saw the destruction of nine structures and sixteen outbuildings, and drew resources from Park County to assist with suppression efforts.

The Jungle Fire in the West Boulder drainage in 2006 began in a wilderness area, but eventually grew to 37,000 acres destroying three outbuildings, and threatening the Main Boulder drainage.

In 2007, The Wicked Creek and Hicks Fires grew to 30,050 acres in upper Mill Creek drainages, threatening rural residences, church camps, and homes in a 54-acre in-holding above Passage Falls. One bridge was destroyed.

Program Review: Successes

Overview

The 2006 CWPP proposed seven functional components of Park County's wildland fire hazard mitigation strategy, each with target objectives and tasks:

1. Program development
2. Prevention
3. Community Assistance
4. Preparedness/Planning
5. Suppression
6. Reducing Hazardous Fuels
7. Rehabilitation/Restoration of Fire Adapted Ecosystems

To date, many of Park County's specific accomplishments address elements from two or more categories, e.g. homeowner outreach programs that concurrently address prevention, planning and hazardous fuels reduction targets. Successes in the last three years will be addressed first, followed by a synopsis of each functional category intended to examine the relevancy of past goals and strategies, incorporate new objectives and methods of risk reduction, as well as presenting current barriers or limitations in program implementation.

Revision of Park County Subdivision Regulations

Areas # 1, 2, 4, 5

2006 saw the revision and eventual adoption of the Park County Subdivision Regulations. Initially adopted in July of 2008, and further amended in April of 2009, the new regulations included significant strengthening of the fire protection standards for new rural subdivision development. This originated from changes in State statutes enacted during the 2007 legislative session. Locally, the Park County Planning Department led this effort, with input from the Fire Council, other fire and planning professionals, developers, and residents--with the intent that the new subdivision regulations allow flexibility between developers and fire departments by allowing the most innovative and successful fire protection techniques, technologies, and systems to be utilized.

Specific acknowledgment of the WUI problem is found in *Section VI-C: Lands Unsuitable for Development*, which states:

Subdivisions on land located in the wildland-urban interface as may be identified by the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, a local Fire Protection Authority (FPA), a local Growth Policy, or a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) are prohibited unless the applicant(s) proposes construction techniques or other mitigation measures that will protect structures and persons in that area. These regulations do not require building regulations, but the proposed construction techniques or other mitigation measures must be approved by the fire protection authority (effective October 1, 2009).

(2009 Park County Subdivision Regulations - Amended April 1st, 2009)

Appendix B: Park County Fire Protection helps to mitigate specific concerns with development in the WUI, including:

- Defining the role of the CWPP
- Increasing the role of the local Fire Protection Authority (FPA) in plans approval
- Establishing minimum water supply requirements
- Requiring *Fire Prevention and Control Plans* for areas in the WUI including provisions for adequate emergency vehicle access/egress and site-specific hazardous fuels reduction plans
- Codification of agreed-upon fire protection notes and covenants in a subdivision's final plat
- Encouraging the adoption of *defensible* and *survivable* space standards

Recent downturns in the national and local economy preclude large-scale 'testing' of these regulations, as many proposed developments remain in abeyance until market conditions improve.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction Grant Assistance Program

Areas # 3, 7

'On-the-ground' efforts to begin hazardous fuels reduction treatments in for private landowners in Park County have met with success. Through a cooperative effort between the Northern Rocky Mountain Resource Conservation & Development area (NRMRC) and Montana State University - Gallatin County Extension over thirty-nine fuels reduction projects were accomplished in the county since 2006, treating almost ninety-seven acres. While mostly concentrated on residential parcels, these efforts also included larger-scale projects at Luccock Park Church Camp and the Yellowstone Bible Camp.

Nine additional proposed projects are currently under review by NRMRC who has been able, thanks to the efforts of leader Crystal Hagerman, to implement a successful grant assistance program that provides up to a fifty percent cost share to landowners, as well as providing direct technical assistance. Funding for these programs comes from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Interior, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).



Before fuels treatment, Bronsky property, Mountain Brook subdivision, Park County, Montana



Bronsky property after 2007 treatment
(Photos courtesy of Crystal Hagerman/NRMRC)

The Big Timber, Livingston, and Gardiner Ranger Districts of the Gallatin National Forest accomplished over 3,000 acres of fuels reductions projects since 2006, using a variety of methods including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire. The Main Boulder River Canyon, identified as a high-risk area in the 2006 CWPP, saw the largest effort, with the start of a multi-year project to treat 2300 acres along the drainage. With over 250 private homes and structures, four church camps, and numerous recreational sites, this area has long been a concern to emergency responders in both Park and Sweetgrass counties due to a lack of alternate access/egress routes road and the close proximity of untreated fuels. The 2006 Derby and Jungle Fires twice forced evacuation of this single-lane corridor, with an estimated summer population of over 3,000 people. Other hazard areas saw fuels treatment successes including projects in Big Creek, Old Chico, Gardiner, and Smith Creek in Meagher County.

Interagency Cooperation - Suppression Planning and Preparedness

Areas # 1, 4, 5

Cooperation between agencies continued to prove beneficial during the series of large fires experienced in 2006 and 2007. The *Park County Fire Council*, composed of the County Fire Warden and local Fire Chiefs, continued to meet at least semi-annually with attendees from the Park County Sheriff's Office, 911 Center, DNRC , the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. These meetings, combined with Park County's continued participation in the South-Central Zone Operating Group, allowed fire managers, prevention specialists, and other program managers to regularly exchange information on resources, capabilities, management protocols, and agency programs--as well as negotiate common operating plans and mutual aid agreements.



Firefighters from Paradise Valley FSA, Park County RFD #1, and the Gallatin National Forest worked together successfully save structures in the Passage Falls subdivision prior to the arrival of the main flaming front during the 2007 Wicked Creek Fire.

(U.S. Forest Service)

Examples of this cooperation included:

- Use of Gallatin County, DNRC, Yellowstone National Park, and Gallatin National Forest suppression resources for initial attack at the beginning of the Big Creek and Wicked fires. Common terminology, credentialing standards, and protocols allowed for quick integration of a variety of extra-county assets.
- Early establishment of a working relationship with on-scene fire managers during the 2007 Owl Fire in Yellowstone National Park. Daily briefings for the Fire Warden and Sheriff's Department, involvement in structure protection planning, and inclusion in public meetings allowed local officials to exchange information on values-at-risk and political concerns with a minimum of delay.

Interagency cooperation also continued to address local training needs for fire departments. Through the South-Central Zone (SCZ) Training Committee, Park County responders received training in basic wildfire suppression as well as upper-level management skills. By coordinating class offerings, sharing instructor cadre and teaching materials, and acknowledging the roles of volunteers by scheduling classes around work schedules and other commitments, the SCZ remains one of the best assets for the preparation of skilled firefighters, regardless of agency. Aside from regular annual trainings, notable accomplishments since 2006 were:

- Successful completion of *DNRC Basic Wildland Firefighter* by twelve firefighters from Livingston Fire and Rescue during the spring of 2008. Although traditionally a structural fire department, recent annexations to the City of Livingston have added a significant wildland component, especially along the Yellowstone River and Highway 10/ I-90 corridors. Increased awareness of wildfire suppression procedures increases the ability of responders to operate safely and plan for future WUI challenges.
- Cooperation between the SCZ, Northern Rocky Mountain RC & D, and the Board of the Luccock United Methodist Camp at Pine Creek provided for a ten-acre WUI fuels reduction project around twenty-six historic camp structures, as part of an annual, multi-day training academy held during 2008. Firefighters from Gallatin and Park Counties, DNRC, and federal land agencies used this fuels reduction project as a platform for 'hands-on' training.



Firefighters learned hands-on skills such as chainsaw operation during the Luccock Camp training event

- Use of local firefighters during 2008 and 2009 prescribed burning projects on the Gallatin National Forest. This inclusion helped to meet a deficit commonly found in rural fire services, where personnel neither have opportunities to routinely use landscape-scale prescribed fire as a tool for reducing fuels nor are offered formal trainings in fire ecology. Over the long-term, continued involvement and growing familiarity with the benefits of prescribed fire could allow Park County fire personnel to serve as intermediaries in softening historically-antagonistic public attitudes towards wildfire.

Goal # 3 of the 2006 CWPP tasked participants to "Raise community awareness of the issues and solutions of living in the wildland urban interface," and suggested the creation of a local website to promote awareness among residents. In the fall of 2009 the Park County Commissioners authorized the hire of a temporary fire planner to meet this objective, and with technical assistance from the Park County GIS department., the website (parkcounty.org/fireriskassessment.html) was deployed for beta-testing in December 2009. While it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the website, the Park County Fire Warden and the Fire Council remain committed to regular editing and refinement of the site for usability. Features of the site include:

- Narratives describing the role of each hazard component (e.g. slope)
- An interactive risk-assessment questionnaire
- Recommendations for preventative property alteration and upkeep measures such as regular removal of ladder fuels, creation and maintenance of *defensible space*, and use of fire-resistant building materials.
- Links to the Park County On-line Mapping Service which features spatial information of fire districts, water supplies, vegetation, road accesses, etc.
- Links to the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Grant Assistance program and other resources such as FIREWISE, Montana fire-resistant landscaping guides, local fire department contacts, and emergency planning information



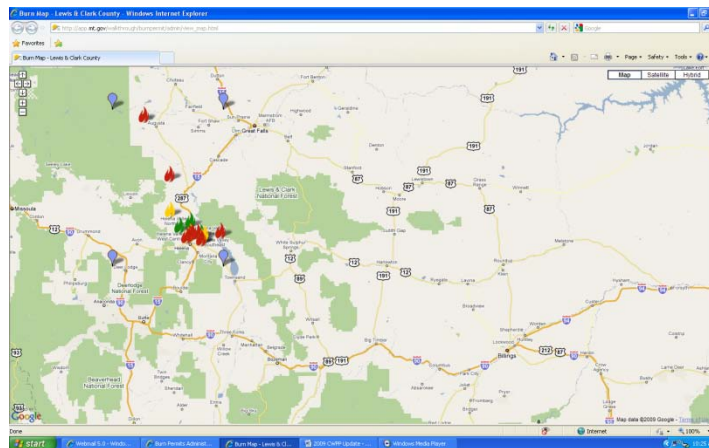
Narratives are keyed to the Risk-Self Assessment Form (right)

Park County Wildfire Risk Self-Assessment Form			
Property Owner(s): _____			
Property Description/Location: _____			
(Select One Response only in each section 1 through 26)			
A. SUBDIVISION DESIGN:			
1. ACCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two or more primary accesses • One primary and one secondary access • One access road in and out 	= 0 = 1 = 2	Score
2. PRIMARY ROAD WIDTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 20' wide • At least 20' wide 	= 1 = 1	Score
3. SECONDARY ROAD CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure on main access road • Road ends in a cul-de-sac • Diameter less than 100 feet • Diameter less than 100 feet 	= 0 = 1 = 2 = 3	Score
4. STREET SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and visible with lettering numbers 4" or taller • Signs not present or visible 	= 1 = 0	Score
5. TYPICAL LOT/PARCEL SIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 5 acres • 1 - 5 acres • Less than 1 acre 	= 0 = 1 = 2	Score
SUBDIVISION DESIGN SUBTOTAL:			
B. SITE HAZARDS: (Outbuilding within 25 feet of residence should be considered as part of residence structure)			
6. DRIVEWAY LENGTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 175 feet long • More than 175 feet long with a minimum 45 feet outside cul-de-sac turnaround • More than 175 feet long and turnaround is inadequate 	= 0 = 1 = 2	Score
7. DRIVEWAY WIDTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 12 feet wide • Less than 12 feet wide • Less than 14 feet of overhead clearance (over hanging branches, power lines) • Road surface inadequate for heavy vehicles 	= 0 = 1 = 1 Add 1	Score
8. DRIVEWAY SLOPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level or sloped length is less than 35 feet • Slope more than 15% or 4:1 or steeper 	= 0 = 1	Score
9. GATED/LOCKED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes 	= 0 = 2	Score

Users can download the self-assessment or use the interactive assessment with an automated scoring function

Park County agencies continued to work together to identify and implement systems and protocols to enhance response to wildfire. With support from the Park County Commissioners and other elected officials, these improvements since 2006 included:

- Adoption of a Reverse 911 system, whose utility in automatically notifying residents of disaster information proved effective in neighboring Sweetgrass County during evacuations triggered by the 2006 Derby and Jungle Fires. Future upgrades will include the ability to reach wireless users.
- Relocation and modernization of the county's main fire radio repeater to the Myer's Flat site south-east of Livingston, assisted by Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) and Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) grants. Respectively funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Interior and administered by the Montana DNRC, these grants also funded new fire shelters for county fire personnel. Past grants helped purchase new portable radios and protective personnel equipment for firefighters, and funded basic wildland fire safety training for deputies from the Park County Sheriff's office.
- Planned March 2010 implementation of an on-line burn permitting service, reducing workloads on 911 dispatchers as well as responses to 'false alarm' calls. Revenue from permit fees will be used to help the Park County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department maintain accurate and timely rural addressing data for responders.



Cooperators such as the Bozeman Interagency Dispatch Center will be able to access real-time map displays of currently-permitted controlled burns, minimizing confusion over geographic location and fire cause.

- Continued use of the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) for all-risk incidents and events such as the 2008 9th Street bridge failure and 2009 county H1N1 Influenza clinics. Institutional use of ICS strengthens cooperation between elected and appointed officials, incident commanders, assisting agencies, and other public and private entities.

Program Review: Challenges

Review of CWPP Goals and Current Challenges

From the seven objectives listed in the 2006 CWPP, the original steering committee developed eight major goals with recommended tasks to support each initiative. This section presents a synoptic view of progress towards each goal, with comments on challenges and current applicability.

Program Development

Goal 1: Build and sustain a county-wide effort that promotes the evolving goals within this plan.

Goal 2: Provide for effective cooperation of government resources on the priority areas identified by the community.

Recommended tasks included creation of a standing group or committee "dedicated to implementing [CWPP] goals." The complexity of WUI issues projects overlapping responsibilities onto many existing advisory and regulatory platforms, including the Fire Council, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Park County Planning Board, and South Central Zone group--whose collective efforts nonetheless show marked progress as evidenced by the successes listed above. Still, creation of a collective exclusively devoted to CWPP priorities remains undone.

Attempts to meet these combined goals have had mixed results since the inception of the CWPP. Park County RFD #1 initially hosted a County Fire Planning and Preparedness position to guide these efforts, enabling endeavors such as school visits, conducted jointly with prevention officers from the U.S. Forest Service; attendance at regional WUI workshops; and a series of site visits and other outreach efforts with residents and groups interested in fuels reduction--such as the Upper Shields River Watershed Group. A full-time presence also facilitated coordination with partners such as Northern Rocky Mountains RC & D and FireSafe Montana. Unfortunately, the fall of 2007 saw the loss of this position due to decreases in revenue and changes in department oversight.

Whether lead by an individual or a collective, these two goals remain attainable, as other efforts within the state attest. For instance, the *Tri-County FireSafe Working Group*--composed of interests in Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson Counties--and the *Lockwood Area FireSafe Council* both illustrate that the creation of healthy and sustained partnerships is achievable.

Recommendations:

- Continue to seek funds to secure at least a part-time Fire Planning and Preparedness position, perhaps jointly supervised by the Park County Fire Council and Planning Dept..
- Determine effective techniques for building and sustaining a local working group by learning from existing organizations (e.g. Tri-County FireSafe) who have overcome funding and demographic challenges.
- Continue Fire Council support for the Park County GIS department.

Prevention and Community Assistance

Goal 3: Raise community awareness of the issues and solutions of living in the wildland urban interface.

Goal 4: Assist local home and landowners to locate and secure resources for reducing risk.

The 2006 presented seventeen tasks to help meet prevention and assistance goals, all of which are still viable. However, until every resident in the WUI can acknowledge their own role in mitigating the wildfire risk, any prevention program cannot be considered 'finished.'

While difficult to qualify, it is believed that many residents in the WUI are still unaware of the wildland fire hazard. Furthermore, a shift in attitudes towards fire protection is still underway, from a perspective of government responsibility for wildfire protection to the realization that living in WUI areas imposes responsibilities *upon the homeowner* as well.

The U.S. Forest Service continues to staff and fund a full-time prevention position in the East Zone (Park and Sweetgrass Counties), who worked with the county mitigation officer during 2006 and 2007 to present information at local fairs and schools, as well as jointly conduct a series of site visits with residents interested in hazard mitigation. The presentation of a 'unified front' with a common message, regardless of affiliation, may have helped change public perceptions regarding the role of federal agencies. Whether or not funding is restored for a county position, the Fire Council and Planning Department should continue to seek ways to coordinate prevention efforts with state and federal partners, emphasizing that local representatives *live here, work here, recreate here, and have families here.*

Any prevention message should address the following realities:

- As mentioned before, residents and homeowners *must* begin accepting a central role in risk reduction. A Homeowner's Code of Responsibility, as detailed in a 2009 report prepared by Montana's DNRC, prefaces specific steps with the following caveats:

Property owners, residents, and visitors in areas threatened by wildfire have a responsibility for their own life safety. Understanding the risks of living in the wildland-urban interface..is part of that responsibility.

The two keys to your survival and that of your property are early preparedness and clear-decision making at the time of the threat. Perform fuels mitigation: create survivable space areas around your buildings...Assets, structures, and property have to be properly prepared and maintained **before** a wildfire threatens...Prepare your property to survive a major wildfire without firefighter intervention. You must have good access, fire-resistant structures and landscaping, an adequate water supply, and a safe area ready in advance.

(Guidelines for Development with the Wildland-Urban Interface,
Appendix A. Montana Department of Natural Resources and
Conservation. September 24, 2009)

- This role includes involvement in community-wide mitigation efforts--for instance, forming a neighborhood association to collectively reduce fuel hazards along evacuation corridors.
- Timely response and suppression of a wildfire in the WUI cannot be relied upon, rather suppression efforts will most likely be hobbled by a lack of resources, safety issues, and factors such as inadequate access and competing priorities during busy statewide seasons, as six out of nine fire seasons since 1999 proved.

Other recommendations:

- Encourage resident and landowner awareness of the roles and responsibilities of local fire organizations, and encourage Fire Chief involvement as a conduit for resident inquiries into existing protection capabilities or mitigations assistance programs.
- Urge local, state, and federal elected and appointed officials to continue support for the Northern Rocky Mountain RC & D's (NRMRCDD) Hazardous Fuels Assistance Program.
- Work with NRMRCDD, the Park Council Fire Council, and the Park County Planning Department to collectively issue press releases highlighting the Hazardous Fuels Assistance Program.
- Research and draft project proposals for the Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant (administered through Montana DNRC).
- Continue to edit and refine the Fire Warden's WUI Website for residents and home owners.

Preparedness/Planning

Goal 5: Plan strategically for wildland fire events in the WUI.

Suggested tasks for this category including the development of home assessment plans and pre-incident planning are still largely undone. The Park County GIS department has developed maps identifying water sources, fuel loadings, and other pertinent information, but most high-hazard areas still lack a comprehensive population protection plan. Current *ad hoc* plans cover the Main Boulder and Smith Creek areas only.

Current impediments include the lack of time available to fire districts for planning purposes. Excepting the City of Livingston, there are only two paid fire staff among the eight fire departments in Park county.

Such functions might be best addressed through a standing sub-committee of the Fire Council, who could agree on target areas (using the hazard areas identified in the 2006 CWPP) and a time table for plan development, focusing perhaps on one or two areas per year.

Suppression

Goal 6: Assist fire protection organizations in acquiring the appropriate resources to maintain and improve protection from wildfires throughout the county.

Again, fire protection agencies in Park County are faced with a diverse workload--such as a Emergency Medical Services--along with a corresponding increase in all-risk training requirements (e.g. annual Hazardous Materials Training). Such demands limit the amount of time available for wildland fire proficiency training and operational protocol development. Nonetheless, participation in NWCG (National Wildfire Coordinating Group) trainings and adherence to joint standards has been excellent, as detailed in some of the successes listed above.

Recommendations:

- Continue Montana DNRC support of the county cooperative program.
- Some WUI areas of Park County, e.g. the West Boulder drainage, are not within fire district boundaries. While wildfire protection is still in place per mutual aid agreements and participation in the county cooperative program with DNRC, inclusion in a fire district might strengthen hazard communication between landowners and local fire authorities.
- Acknowledge that a decline in volunteerism is a national problem that does not just affect fire departments. An increasing lack of qualified volunteer firefighters will challenge the ability to respond to and safely suppress wildland fires, as well as impact fire prevention and planning efforts within local jurisdictions.

Reducing Hazardous Fuels

Goal 7: Identify and prioritize WUI areas and use fuel reduction strategies to reduce the risk in those area.

There have not been any substantial changes to demographic patterns since the original assessment in the 2006 CWPP. A decline in the national economy has slowed local development, and at least two major proposed development have been tabled pending an upturn in the economy.

As a tool in assessing risk, fire history included ignition source, size, and exact location is an important part, however, there is still no comprehensive data base for Park County, expecting publicly-owned lands.

Recommendations:

- Encourage local fire department to participate in NFIRS (National Fire Incident Reporting System) reporting.
- Provide accurate geodata to the Park County GIS department for inclusion in annual fire history maps, whose format should be compatible with Montana DNRC and federal GIS databases.
- The Fire Council and Park County Planning Department should work to refine local WUI definitions, and update treatment priorities as fuels, growth patterns, and other factors change.

Rehabilitation and Restoration of Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

Goal 8: Develop strategic, scientific based, economically viable solutions that promote restoration and rehabilitation of ecosystem function.

Management of existing programs at the county level, such as weed control and support for local conservation districts remains relatively unchanged since the inception of this report. Efforts for restoration on public lands have largely been the purview of the U.S. Forest Service, with a recognition that historical fire suppression has changed plant and species composition. Work continues on federal lands as detailed in previous narratives regarding efforts such as recent prescribed fire activity. Current national legislation such as the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act and U.S. Senator Jon Tester's proposed Forest Jobs and Recreation Act may improve opportunities for restoration of public lands and provide increased funding for WUI mitigation regardless of ownership.

Several tasks under this goal centered on woody biomass utilization as a possible economic offset to fuels reduction. To date there are not any current initiatives in Park County, however, interest in alternative fuel sources and renewable energy remains strong, as evidenced by attendance at local events centered on these topics.

9,550 acres of privately-owned parcels in Park County were put into conservation easements between January 2006 and August 2008.

Contact Information - December 2009

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